

1 PUBLIC COMMENTS - PLAINVIEW - 6:30 - MAY 4, 2010

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3 In the Matter of the Application by Xcel Energy for a
4 Route Permit for the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345 kV
5 Transmission Line Project

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7 PUC Docket Number: E002/TL-09-1448

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17 May 4, 2010

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20 American Legion
21 215 3rd Street SW
22 Plainview, Minnesota
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1 MR. LANGAN: Okay. So we're prepared to
2 take some comments and questions now. The way we'll
3 do this is we'll ask you to come up and, sorry to
4 put you right on the spot here, and speak right at
5 the microphone. We'll ask you to state your name
6 and spell it for the court reporter.

7 And, again, you know, we're happy to
8 answer questions either on the state review process
9 or the project itself and then we're also happy to
10 receive any comments that you may have this evening.

11 The way we'll run it, we have a few
12 people that have signed up on the speaker
13 registration cards so we'll take those names first.
14 Then we'll open it up to the group and we can just
15 go by a show of hand or raise your hand and we'll
16 call you up to ask your question or provide your
17 comment.

18 But I will ask, I notice that some of the
19 folks here were here earlier today and were able to
20 provide some questions and comments, I'll place the
21 priority on the folks that are here for their first
22 meeting tonight so they can have their questions and
23 comments heard, but we'll certainly get to everybody
24 tonight. And so I'll ask that maybe some of those
25 folks that were able to contribute today to let some

1 new folks get a crack at it, but I promise that
2 we'll get to everybody tonight.

3 Okay. And the first name is Dale
4 Rohlfing.

5 MR. DALE ROHLFING: Thank you,
6 Mr. Langan. I'm Dale Rohlfing, D-A-L-E,
7 R-O-H-L-F-I-N-G.

8 I'd like to read a statement and then
9 present some pictures and the statement after I
10 finish. And I'll hang around for some questions
11 later.

12 MR. LANGAN: Okay.

13 MR. DALE ROHLFING: Okay. I'm here this
14 evening with my wife, Suzanne Rohlfing. And we are
15 writing and speaking tonight about the CapX 2020
16 project and the proposed alternate north route
17 crossing the Zumbro River. So I guess we'll have
18 issues and impacts to present.

19 Our property is called the Rohlfing Raj,
20 which means paradise in Czech. It's a beautiful,
21 50-acre piece of land, which we were able to
22 purchase in 2002. It is our investment for our
23 children and generations to come.

24 It is rural, forested, full of wildlife
25 and located just east of the Zumbro River in Wabasha

1 County, in Section -- or Township 109, Brown Earth,
2 R14W, Section 15. We are planning a residence to
3 enable us to better steward this property and help
4 ensure its natural integrity for generations to
5 come. Those plans are now on hold and will be
6 unattainable if the CapX alternate route is chosen
7 at the Zumbro River crossing.

8 Although we have general concerns about
9 the CapX 2020 transmission line project, we now have
10 more obvious and immediate worries. We will briefly
11 list our concerns and areas that we wish to be
12 studied by the draft environmental impact statement.

13 First, we'd like to address the natural
14 resource concerns in our -- on our property. Our
15 50-acre tree farm lies in the Richard Dorer Memorial
16 Hardwood State Forest. We have a current DNR
17 forestry management plan in place, which started
18 with our previous owner back in the 1970s and it was
19 hence revised in 2002.

20 In addition to the trees we farm, we have
21 a blend of native soft and hardwood throughout our
22 property. It's a peaceful habitat for many deer,
23 pheasant in the field and Cedars in the northwest
24 section, wild turkey, ruffed grouse nestings and
25 fox. Implementation of prairie and also savanna

1 restoration and reintroduction of native plant
2 species is underway. We have a sedge wetland, which
3 not only assists with native amphibian and reptile
4 habitat, but includes our attempts to restore the
5 wood duck population in this area. There is a bald
6 eagle nest just northwest of our property on the
7 Zumbro River. There is a class one special
8 regulation small mouth bass section at the proposed
9 route over the Zumbro River. This alternate route
10 would fragment the sustainability of the
11 above-mentioned natural resources and place great
12 pressure on the forest ecosystem.

13 As I mentioned, we are actively tree
14 farming, so we have some economic concerns as well,
15 which include the following: We feel that there
16 will be a decrease in property value. Secondly, we
17 are actively -- our tree farming, as I mentioned, we
18 have approximately 30 acres of planted white and red
19 pine and black walnut, which was done by the DNR
20 back in the '70s. The proposed alternate route
21 would wipe out the majority of our 30-year-old pine
22 and walnut on our north property line where that
23 planting was done. We would never be allowed to
24 plant those trees again. Thirdly, our land and its
25 utilization is a piece for recreation and aesthetic

1 value in the region will be lost forever. We would
2 lose hunting habitat and revenue associated with it.

3 The clearing and continued maintenance of
4 the 150-foot swath would increase proliferation of
5 undesirable plants and invasives such as buck thorn.
6 This would threaten our forests and prairie savanna
7 restoration efforts on a permanent basis.

8 We are also concerned about the erosion
9 effects on our property and impact on the Zumbro
10 River where there is no bridge crossing and water
11 quality in that area. We are concerned about the
12 methods of maintenance utilized considering the
13 sensitivity of this area. To be very upfront, this
14 route would place a terrible scar through the woods.

15 The majority of the proposed alternate
16 north route uses no existing transmission line, road
17 or property lines, and as I mentioned, there is no
18 existing bridge crossing the Zumbro River. The
19 costs would be enormous.

20 Other routes would avoid destruction of
21 our native natural ecosystem and habitat. We
22 encourage use of existing corridors along roads and
23 transmission lines, easements that are already in
24 place, where maintenance would be much more easily
25 attainable and there would be less wild and natural

1 habitat destruction, less proliferation as well as
2 less residential impact.

3 My wife and I appreciate your review and
4 careful assessment pursuant to Minnesota state law,
5 rules and guidelines. We would like it to be noted
6 that we will also be forwarding some more detailed
7 information before May 20th.

8 With respect, Dale and Suzanne Rohlfing.
9 Thank you.

10 Who do I present this to?

11 MR. LANGAN: Thank you.

12 Joanie, do I have that right?

13 MS. JEANNIE SCHREADER: Jeannie, maybe?

14 MR. LANGAN: I'm sorry, Jeannie. It's
15 kind of dark up here, I apologize. Please come on
16 up.

17 MS. JEANNIE SCHREADER: Hi. I'm Jeannie
18 Schreader, J-E-A-N-N-I-E, S-C-H-R-E-A-D-E-R. And
19 I'm from the northern route, the alternative route.

20 And you're proposing to cut our farm in
21 half with the power lines, and they'll run close to
22 the milking site and our land is very susceptible to
23 sinkholes. We've had one which will be within the
24 corridor, the route, that you have proposed. And
25 these spontaneously fall in. There's three

1 different types of sinkholes that we have on our
2 property. They're the ones that drain directly into
3 the groundwater, which we've had repaired by Wabasha
4 County. We also had one that was a sinkhole that
5 started just as an area about this round
6 (indicating) and it sank about, oh, six inches, a
7 foot, then the next year it got bigger and shallower
8 and it just grew. So we had them excavate that also
9 while they did the sinkhole with the drainage, the
10 water, and went down 15 feet, found no rock, no
11 bedrock, and couldn't figure out why it was sinking.
12 So apparently there's very deep sinkholes in this
13 area. And I don't know how you would test for them.

14 Also, to me that would affect the
15 integrity of the power lines, placing them on this
16 ground. The farm west of us also has sinkholes and
17 the farms east of us have also had sinkholes. It
18 may be something you want to really look at and
19 consider.

20 And, also, our farming operation. We do
21 hay bales, we do bales that weigh between 40, 50
22 pounds, they're 45 feet long. We make multiple
23 trips over the field each harvest and there's three
24 harvests, four harvests per season. First we go and
25 cut the hay, then we take the hay cutter to take the

1 hay off the ground to help it dry more quickly, and
2 then we go and we rake the hay, bale the hay, and we
3 have a wagon that comes and picks up the hay. So
4 we're making multiple trips.

5 And we have health concerns because of
6 all the dust and everything that goes up in the air,
7 the hay particles, and you will be inhaling those.
8 And I don't think that being in the magnetic field
9 would be particularly helpful. And also our
10 equipment is making a lot of passes over this area,
11 which lends to a possibility of having damage to our
12 equipment.

13 And I just wanted to reiterate the fact
14 that our route has not got as many existing
15 features, right-of-ways, easements, to come across
16 the land.

17 And that's primarily what I have to say
18 at this point. Thank you.

19 MR. LANGAN: Okay, thank you.

20 Okay. Those are the two folks that
21 signed up to speak. And we'll just go by a show of
22 hands, or just raise your hand if you've got a
23 question, or a question you'd like to ask or a
24 comment you'd like to make, we'll open it up to the
25 whole group.

1 Yes, please.

2 MS. JULIE DEVICK: How do we find out who
3 is involved in the advisory task force? You said
4 local governments and townships and so forth are
5 involved, and I guess I'm wondering which townships
6 are involved in it.

7 MR. LANGAN: The information is available
8 on our website. We do have a list of -- it's both
9 the structure and charge of the task force, so what
10 the task force is charged with, and then there's a
11 list of the names and who they represent on those.
12 If you go to -- are you familiar with our website,
13 or have you been to our website?

14 MS. JULIE DEVICK: I didn't know it
15 existed.

16 MR. LANGAN: Let me go back. Okay. So
17 our website is energyfacilities, that's one word,
18 dot, PUC, dot, state, dot, mn, dot, us. One second.
19 And I'll just explain where you go. When you get
20 onto that website you'll see -- you'll be able to
21 select from different types of developments, where
22 there's power lines, power plants, transmission
23 plants or wind power. If you select on transmission
24 lines, a list of all of the transmission line
25 projects that we're reviewing right now will pop up,

1 scroll down and find the Hampton to Rochester to
2 LaCrosse.

3 And if you -- and when you click on that
4 project page, or that docket page, the route permit
5 application, there will be a link for the route
6 permit application and all the maps, there will be
7 an advisory task force link that you can click on.
8 In fact, do we have one or two -- do we have one for
9 each or it's two? Yeah, so we have one link for
10 each task force.

11 Again, the one that's focusing on the
12 area from Hampton to Rochester and the one that
13 would focus on, basically, Pine Island to Kellogg.
14 It's going to be listed as North Rochester to
15 Mississippi River. That's the name of the task
16 force. And there you'll find information on the
17 task force, who's involved and its proceedings. And
18 when there's a task force report at the end of their
19 work, that will also be available for review. That
20 was more than you asked for, but --

21 MR. WES DEVICK: Wes Devick, D-E-V-I-C-K.

22 My big question is we had a double line
23 pole on my folks' property growing up. And they did
24 have an accident once where the line burned through
25 due to trees arcing back and forth. The line came

1 down and it was carrying power clear out to Colorado
2 and so they had a hard time shutting it off. I
3 guess my question is, as far as how close can the
4 line be to a house? You know, I mean, what's the
5 minimum distance we're looking at for clearance?

6 MR. LANGAN: Sure. Tom, do you want to
7 talk a little bit about the right-of-way and how
8 it's constructed and what's allowed in or outside
9 that right-of-way?

10 MR. HILLSTROM: Sure. The right-of-way
11 for this kind of a line is 150-feet wide in general,
12 and that's 75 feet on either side of the pole. And
13 what that means is that no structures or
14 tall-growing trees can be allowed in there. And the
15 reason for that is trees, as you mentioned, trees
16 tend to sway in the wind and we need to keep the
17 branches away from the power, the energized power
18 lines to prevent that arcing and to prevent safety
19 hazards. And the same holds true, that clearance
20 needs to be maintained for structures as well.

21 So if we -- and there are rules, National
22 Electric Safety Code rules that prescribe those
23 clearance zones and that's what we go by. We even
24 add another safety margin onto those National
25 Electric Safety Codes for an extra margin of safety.

1 So that 150-foot wide right-of-way gives us all we
2 need to make sure that structures or tree branches
3 stay far enough away from those lines.

4 MR. WES DEVICK: I guess the other thing,
5 though, as far as regulation, we talked to someone
6 at -- what was it, nuclear medicine at Mayo, and
7 their suggestion was 400 feet minimum from the wires
8 for any people. Is that doable? You know, what are
9 we looking at here? What I'm trying to get at is
10 how far from people, too.

11 MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah, there is a concern
12 about EMF, electromagnetic fields. Now, that's
13 something that has been studied for the past 30
14 years. About 30 years ago people began to get
15 suspicious that these electric fields might have
16 some health concern. And it's been studied over and
17 over again over the past 30 years. And what they
18 found is that, you know, if they do a statistical
19 analysis they get some kind of suspicion that, okay,
20 proximity of somebody to a power line may have some
21 connection to health impact, but when they take
22 these studies to the next level, doing laboratory
23 studies, doing dose studies and doing more of the
24 controlled kind of studies that they do to determine
25 if there is a health impact, they found no

1 conclusive connection to electric fields and any
2 kind of health impact.

3 MR. WES DEVICK: Okay. But my question
4 still remains, how far can you expect it to be away
5 from your house? I mean, I don't want one within
6 150 feet of my house. It's not very far.

7 MR. HILLSTROM: Actually, 75 feet is the
8 minimum distance.

9 MR. WES DEVICK: That's very close. We
10 don't want to live there.

11 MR. HILLSTROM: And it has been a
12 priority for us to avoid those kind of situations.
13 We have put a lot of work in developing these routes
14 and proximity to homes is an important consideration
15 that we've used. We've done our best to find routes
16 that minimize the proximity to homes, and balancing
17 all the other criteria, also. But, you know, there
18 are some cases where you just can't avoid going near
19 a house. And I don't think we have any as close as
20 75 feet, but there may be some, you know, closer
21 than you'd like, I'm sure.

22 MR. WES DEVICK: Yeah, well, 75 feet is
23 like from here to the back wall. That's pretty
24 good, isn't it?

25 MR. HILLSTROM: And I don't think we've

1 got any that are that close.

2 MR. WES DEVICK: I sure hope not. Would
3 you want to live there? I don't think you would.
4 Point's made.

5 MS. ANNE FICK: My name is an Anne,
6 A-N-N-E, Fick, F-I-C-K.

7 And I have some questions. Why is the
8 line being built?

9 MR. LANGAN: Okay. There will be a
10 two-part answer to this. I'll let Tom talk about
11 the electrical engineering portions of this.

12 One is for reliability of the electrical
13 system, to -- maybe I should fully let Tom answer
14 this one. But it is the reliability of the electric
15 system.

16 And one of the -- we talked about the
17 Public Utilities Commission approval of this
18 project, of a route permit, they also have another
19 approval that a utility needs to seek and that's
20 called a certificate of need. So the utility needs
21 to prove to the Public Utilities Commission that
22 there's a need within the electric system, given the
23 demand that's out there, given the reliability of
24 the system. And that is something that the Public
25 Utilities Commission approved last May, about a year

1 ago.

2 And so they have met that first
3 requirement, or that requirement, and now, since
4 they've established a need for it, now we're talking
5 about, okay, if there is a need, where should it be
6 routed to get to those end points.

7 Tom, would you like to talk more about
8 reliability of the system? Thanks.

9 MR. HILLSTROM: Sure. Yeah, I can
10 address it in general, and then we do have some of
11 our engineers here who can talk to you, again, after
12 the meeting. Like Matt said, this is a routing
13 proceeding.

14 But, in general, the needs are basically
15 in three categories. The first category is that the
16 city of Rochester and the area around Rochester is a
17 growing area and that area needs more electrical
18 supply. So there's a focus, a local need area in
19 Rochester. The same thing is going on in the city
20 of LaCrosse and the area around it, including
21 Le Crescent and Winona. So there are these focused
22 areas that are growing that need more power supply
23 to maintain a reliable electric supply.

24 Another element of that need is a general
25 regional electric transmission reliability concern.

1 As these local areas have grown, so has the entire
2 country. And as the entire country grows, the
3 entire regional transmission system is getting
4 strained, so in order to maintain that reliable
5 regional supply of electricity, the regional
6 electric transmission system needs to be upgraded.

7 And then the third element is renewable
8 energy. We're seeing more and more requirements of
9 the state on a policy level telling utilities that
10 they need to get up to 25, 30 percent of renewable
11 power in their supplies, and that renewable energy
12 is coming primarily from wind power. And wind power
13 is an intermittent supply, so at times you get a
14 whole bunch of wind power on the system when the
15 wind is blowing fast and at times you don't get very
16 much wind power at all on the system. And those
17 windy times don't necessarily correspond to your
18 peak use time, so you get more of a variable flow on
19 the system and that is another factor that requires
20 the transmission system to be beefed up.

21 So those are the three elements of the
22 need.

23 MS. ANNE FICK: Okay.

24 MR. LANGAN: Do you have more questions?

25 MS. ANNE FICK: On this flow chart it

1 talks about the contested case hearing. And I just
2 wondered what entity contests anything? I mean, is
3 it individual landowners or is it a government
4 entity or, I mean, who does the contesting?

5 MR. LANGAN: Sure. Well, for the
6 contested case hearing, one, there's a public
7 hearing component that goes into that. So the
8 administrative law judge will sit at a table in much
9 like this format and ask people to come up and
10 provide information and materials and comments on
11 the various routes that are under review. So there
12 is a public component to that. Then there is a
13 provision for intervenors, formal intervenors in the
14 process that follow through and have a formal role
15 in the contested case hearings. So there are a few
16 different elements, in terms of how participation is
17 handled during that administrative law judge
18 hearing.

19 MS. ANNE FICK: What is a formal
20 intervenor?

21 MR. LANGAN: Where are my lawyers in the
22 room? Who can explain that?

23 MS. ANNE FICK: Is it a legal -- it would
24 be someone with a legal background, probably a
25 lawyer?

1 MR. LANGAN: Yeah. It could be, I guess,
2 usually that's the case, but it is, you know,
3 there's a process to apply for that early on in the
4 process. And, yeah, I guess that's it.

5 MS. ANNE FICK: That's all right, I'm
6 just learning.

7 And then the last question I have, at
8 least so far, is when the landowner gets
9 compensation, do they get compensation for the
10 route, the 1,000-foot route, or do they get
11 compensation for the 150-foot right-of-way.

12 MR. LANGAN: Thank you. And, Tom, I'm
13 going to call you back up here to answer that
14 question.

15 MR. HILLSTROM: The compensation would be
16 for the easement and that would correspond to that
17 150-foot wide area.

18 MR. LANGAN: Thank you. Yes, sir.

19 MR. MIKE STEFFES: Mike Steffes,
20 S-T-E-F-F-E-S.

21 One question, getting back to his
22 question, how close can you be to that thing, not
23 just walking under it once, I'm talking living next
24 to it. They won't tell you that answer because
25 they're scared if they give you an answer here, you

1 know, you got something to go on in court that's why
2 they don't give you an answer. And we're not going
3 to get that answer tonight so I'll move on.

4 Okay. What's the height of that tower?
5 I heard somewhere it could be a 300-foot tower.
6 True or false?

7 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Can I back up to the
8 first question, if I can expand on that answer? It
9 is difficult to give you an answer about where that
10 line is going to go at this phase of the project.
11 What's been proposed and what we're reviewing at
12 this time is a 1,000 foot right-of-way -- or excuse
13 me, a 1,000-foot route, and within that a 150-foot
14 right-of-way.

15 So I can appreciate that completely, I
16 understand that folks would like to know where it's
17 planned to go right now, but we're far from that
18 type of a determination and that's --

19 MR. MIKE STEFFES: I didn't ask exactly
20 where it was going to go, I said how close can you
21 live next to it.

22 MR. LANGAN: And the answer would be, if
23 there's a 150-foot right-of-way with 75 feet on
24 either side, then 75 would be the closest.

25 MR. MIKE STEFFES: That's not good health

1 wise, I can tell you that.

2 MR. LANGAN: And right now there's no
3 homes within 75 feet of that.

4 It is something that we do study in our
5 environmental impact statement. We look at reports
6 by the World Health Organization, by the Minnesota
7 Department of Health, by the states that surround us
8 here in the region that have done studies on any
9 potential health effects, and that's information
10 that we're going to include in our environmental
11 impact statement. So that's what I can tell you
12 now.

13 MR. MIKE STEFFES: Another point I want
14 to clarify here is, from what I'm getting here from
15 these other meetings and stuff, if you're not within
16 that 150-foot swath, you'll never get compensated
17 anything. True or false?

18 MR. LANGAN: The easement -- and here I'm
19 talking a little bit out of school, maybe Tom, if
20 you want to answer this -- but the easement would be
21 to the landowners along that -- that host that
22 150-foot right-of-way.

23 MR. MIKE STEFFES: Right. And another
24 question. Could you have a 300-foot tower?
25 According to some of your information --

1 MR. LANGAN: Thank you, that was your
2 other question.

3 MR. MIKE STEFFES: Now, I got a 300-foot
4 tower, that's 300 feet, that's not 75 feet from the
5 center, that's 300 feet, simple math. And in this
6 area over here, it might fall on his house and he
7 don't get anything, until his house blows up, then
8 you might get the checkbook out.

9 MR. LANGAN: If I may, the towers are not
10 300 feet tall, they are 150 to 170 feet tall for the
11 345 kilovolt line.

12 MR. MIKE STEFFES: 75 feet each way ain't
13 enough. The tower that falls over, that's 150 feet
14 that way. You need twice as wide.

15 So what I'm getting at here, put me down
16 as I'm against the north route, from wherever, the
17 Rochester substation heading towards Kellogg, I'm
18 against the north alternate one. So what I'm
19 getting at is that thing could be 75 feet right up
20 to my line. I'm not going to get compensated
21 anything, but it might fall on my house. It
22 might -- the family would have to get the lawyer to
23 get your checkbook out then. That's what I'm
24 getting at. The 75 feet, my friend, ain't enough.
25 Now, if the tower is 150 feet, Mother Nature, you

1 can't outguess her, she'll put that tower down in
2 big storms, it happens. And the guy next to it
3 isn't going to get nothing till he's hurt. I'm
4 done.

5 MR. LANGAN: Yes.

6 MR. ROY TERRY: I've got a comment I'd
7 like to make. My name is Roy Terry, R-O-Y,
8 T-E-R-R-Y.

9 First of all, I want to thank you guys
10 for holding these scoping meetings, and we hope that
11 you, unlike the Wabasha County Board with our recent
12 jail issue, that you seriously consider the comments
13 made by the residents that are affected by this
14 project.

15 I want to urge you to use the preferred
16 route in the existing Dairyland 230 line corridor, I
17 feel that that would have the smallest impact on the
18 environment, on land use, and on the residences.

19 The alternative 345 kilovolt route passes
20 between 150 and 300 feet of the proposed center line
21 of my neighbor, Tom Files (phonetic). He's in
22 Section 30 of Watopa Township and it also passes
23 within 550 feet of my home in Section 25 of Highland
24 Township. This alternative route goes directly
25 across the center of my property and across the area

1 where we regularly work and train our horses. We
2 also raise hay for those horses, and as the woman
3 described haying previously, there's a lot of trips
4 across that hay field to gather that crop.

5 The wooded area that would cross on my
6 property, we have trails in that area, hiking, we
7 use them for hiking, ATVs, hunting. My neighbors
8 hunt coon down there, the neighborhood boys ride
9 their ATVs, I gather firewood. So it's a heavily
10 used area on my property.

11 I should have brought my reading glasses.

12 MR. DALE ROHLFING: You can borrow mine.

13 MR. ROY TERRY: You are always supposed
14 to bring them. Thank you.

15 I was supposed to bring an alternate
16 solution, and so I'd like to propose a couple
17 substitute routes that would reduce the impact on at
18 least these two farm sites.

19 The first one would be to break away from
20 the existing corridor west at County Highway 14.
21 That would better implement Minnesota's policy on
22 nonproliferation and utilize existing right-of-way.
23 If that's not possible, the second would be to break
24 away from the existing corridor at the south line of
25 Section 30 in Watopa Township and follow it west

1 along the south line of Section 25 in Highland
2 Township.

3 These -- yeah, I guess that's it. I've
4 already dropped my comments off in your box and I've
5 got a map attached actually showing my property
6 boundaries. Again, thanks for giving us the
7 opportunity to express these concerns.

8 MR. LANGAN: Thank you.

9 MR. CHUCK FICK: Hello. My name is Chuck
10 Fick, F as in Frank, I-C-K. I appreciate you having
11 this meeting here. I certainly don't envy your
12 positions, to some degree, so I've got some
13 questions, too.

14 We talked a lot about the effects on
15 humans. What about us livestock farmers, especially
16 with cattle, they are notorious for being extremely
17 sensitive to electricity, and so I was just
18 wondering if that's going to be included in your
19 table of contents on your EIS.

20 MR. LANGAN: It is now. But, actually,
21 it would be, yeah, that's something that we look at,
22 in terms of any health effects to cattle and to farm
23 operations along the routes. So, yes, that is
24 something we intend to look at and to provide
25 information in the environmental impact statement.

1 MR. CHUCK FICK: Another question is, as
2 you route out the line, you use existing
3 right-of-ways or corridors, there are none, others
4 that you could use? I mean, you talk about going on
5 247 or something else. I mean, you know, the
6 northern alternative route would affect us, the
7 southern route, those will affect all my friends.
8 I'd just as soon not have it. So, I mean, is that
9 really studied really hard as far as routing it
10 someplace where there is lines already running or
11 something like that?

12 MR. LANGAN: I can answer that and maybe
13 Tom wants to jump in, too, with, you know, he kind
14 of described how they came about the two routes that
15 they proposed as they did. And I think Tom has said
16 that, you know, they come by those routes humbly,
17 recognizing that the folks that live every day in
18 the area may have yet another route that may work
19 and may, in fact, make more sense.

20 So, we certainly, our office would
21 certainly welcome a suggestion, as you're saying, if
22 it's 247 or another route, and if you can provide
23 some justification for why we ought to study that
24 route, it's something we'll consider including in
25 the scope and study it out along with the one that

1 is proposed here by the utility, so in addition to
2 what is proposed by the utility.

3 MR. CHUCK FICK: A person signing that
4 easement, what are they agreeing to?

5 MR. LANGAN: Very good question. And the
6 easement process really happens outside of our
7 review, it's after we've done our environmental
8 review, so I will let Tom or a representative of
9 Xcel address that question.

10 MR. HILLSTROM: I can tell you just in
11 general, I'm not the real estate agent or the lawyer
12 that writes these things. But what the easement
13 says is that the utility can build the line on your
14 property and it can access that line and it can
15 maintain that easement free of obstructions to the
16 line. And the obstructions are trees and
17 structures, basically. What it allows landowners to
18 do is anything else. It keeps the interference from
19 the line out of that 150-foot area, it keeps the
20 safe clearance. It doesn't prevent you from using
21 the land as you always have, particularly in a
22 agricultural area, you continue to farm the land
23 under the line and the easement just as you always
24 have, the only thing is trees and obstructions from
25 being put in there and it allows the utility to

1 access and maintain that line.

2 MR. CHUCK FICK: Final question. What if
3 a person refuses to sign the easement?

4 MR. HILLSTROM: The process that we're
5 going through here will result in a permit from the
6 state specifying where the route would be approved.
7 And with that permit, the utilities are allowed to
8 use the process of eminent domain. So if the
9 landowner and the utility can't agree on an
10 acquisition, then it can go to the eminent domain
11 process.

12 And that can happen not only if the
13 landowner just says no way, but it can happen if
14 there's not an agreement in the price. For
15 instance, if you think the utility is not offering
16 you a fair price you can say, no, I don't agree with
17 this. So then what that does is it brings it to
18 this eminent domain process, and what that does is
19 it allows three independent and local commissioners,
20 a panel of three local appraisers, to be convened
21 and they hear the landowner's side and they hear the
22 utility's side and what they do is they sort of
23 mediate, they come up with a price that the utility
24 has to pay and that the landowner has to accept.

25 MR. CHUCK FICK: Thank you.

1 MR. LANGAN: Yes, you're next. I'll get
2 to the back of the room.

3 MS. JULIE DEVICK: Julie Devick again.

4 You talk about the route width as 1,000
5 feet wide. Where does that start? When all these
6 meetings started we would come in and meet with the
7 guys and the laptops in the back and try to figure
8 out how close our house was to the proposed route.
9 And the first time we came in it was like 700 feet.
10 Well, what they did was they took our property and
11 put a dot in the middle of it and that's what they
12 measured from. Well, our house was 200 feet closer
13 to that route. If the width is 1,000 feet, we are
14 in that width, we are not -- the property -- so we
15 are one of the property owners that that crosses.

16 So I guess my question is where are you
17 starting those lines? It's like when you're on the
18 highway and it says X miles to Rochester, where is
19 that point in Rochester where you're hitting that
20 mile marker?

21 MR. LANGAN: Okay. I'm going to answer
22 the question and then if I misunderstood it you just
23 help me along here . But in terms of where it
24 starts, we do request that at the time that they
25 submit their application that they specify a route

1 width. So, in terms of where it starts, that's
2 where they come up with a 1,000 foot corridor, we
3 ask that as part of their application that they
4 specify how wide that route is. So from a time
5 stamp, that's when that 1,000 foot corridor, you
6 know, anything from the right-of-way up to a mile
7 and a quarter, anything in between, in this case
8 1,000, that's where that starts, that's a temporal
9 thing, a time thing.

10 What we've been asking the utilities to
11 do is, in addition to supplying us with that
12 corridor, that 1,000-foot route, is to show where,
13 at this point, at this very early point in the
14 process, where they think that transmission line
15 might go within that -- within that route corridor.

16 So, I think it's represented on the maps
17 back there, and it is certainly in the application
18 as well, you'll see sort of a shaded area and that's
19 the route, that's the 1,000-foot route, and then
20 there is either a purple solid line or sort of a
21 purple dashed line, and I think it's represented on
22 the maps back here, too, where they think at this
23 early point in the process where that transmission
24 line, where that center line might be.

25 But, again -- but, again, this is early

1 on in the process, we've got a lot of information to
2 gather so that's certainly not a final. But we do
3 ask that the utilities provide that as a starting
4 point for discussion and review amongst folks.

5 MS. JULIE DEVICK: So is that
6 something -- we've got like three lots that are very
7 narrow with homes on them, and we would all be in
8 that 1,000 feet zone. Is that something we can get
9 together and say this is where we want it? I mean,
10 'cause you get the person in the middle saying,
11 well, I'm going to show it in so and so's yard, and
12 then it could go back and forth for a long time. Is
13 that something we have any control on, where that
14 goes within that 1,000 feet?

15 MR. LANGAN: Within the 1,000 feet is
16 meant to provide some of that flexibility that I
17 think you're talking about.

18 MS. JULIE DEVICK: Some wiggle room?

19 MR. LANGAN: Some wiggle room. If
20 there's an advantageous right-of-way within that
21 1,000-foot corridor, that 1,000-foot route, the idea
22 is is that it provides the flexibility for the
23 utility and the landowner to look at where best to
24 place that 150-foot right-of-way.

25 So, yes, if I'm understanding your

1 question, that's the purpose of looking at first a
2 corridor and then down the road the landowner and
3 the utility can sort of work out where best to place
4 that 150-foot right-of-way.

5 MS. JULIE DEVICK: So you could put it on
6 the far edge of that 1,000 feet?

7 MR. LANGAN: Yes.

8 MS. JULIE DEVICK: Thank you.

9 MR. LANGAN: Sir.

10 MR. DENNIS KREOFISKY: Dennis Kreofsky,
11 D-E-N-N-I-S, K-R-E-O-F-S-K-Y.

12 Matt, you said earlier that when you
13 applied for this permit, or during the permitting
14 process, there was a requirement that you had to
15 have a preferred and an alternate route. Okay. I
16 live along the 165 kilovolt line in Watopa Township,
17 your preferred route and your alternate route are
18 exactly the same. It's like going to a restaurant
19 and there's two options, hot dogs and hot dogs.
20 It's the same thing, it's not an alternate. So how
21 does that meet the requirement?

22 MR. LANGAN: Thank you. I heard the hot
23 dog to hot dog requirement, that's excellent, thank
24 you. Yes, you're exactly right. There is a shared
25 segment that's about a seven-, eight-mile segment of

1 the 106-mile overall proposal here. And, frankly,
2 that is common, that there are shared segments
3 within proposals where there's a predominant --
4 where there's a predominant feature. And in this
5 case those preferred and alternate lines follow that
6 existing line there. And I think with that
7 landscape and terrain in there, it's sort of one
8 that sticks out as an existing corridor in that area
9 in order to get to the river.

10 So, again, it's common that, you know, if
11 the utility comes in and 95 percent of the route is
12 the same, that that would be one thing, but it is
13 common for shared segments to show up in these.

14 Now, that said, that does not prevent you
15 or anyone from suggesting another way to get to that
16 Minnesota end point, that Minnesota terminus point.
17 So if you know of another route in the area where
18 you can get to that area near Kellogg or Alma on the
19 other side of the river, that's something that we
20 would certainly take a look at and consider
21 including in the EIS.

22 MR. DENNIS KREOFISKY: Okay. In the
23 right-of-way, or the -- I guess, is it easement?
24 Yeah, okay. The easement agreement, in the event
25 that these lines are no longer used or required, is

1 there language in there for the removal and
2 restoration of property?

3 MR. LANGAN: Removal and restoration
4 of -- okay. So removal of the line and restoration
5 of the property where the line was built. That's an
6 excellent question and I stand here and I don't know
7 the answer to that right now. That is -- that's a
8 good comment and one that I'm glad that we have
9 down, that's something I'd like to look into.

10 I think it's frankly rare that utility
11 lines of this capacity and this length and for this
12 purpose get removed, but -- and so that's why it's
13 typically not something that we would have in an
14 EIS. But thank you for the comment. Let me think
15 about that and we'll consider that for inclusion.

16 MR. DENNIS KREOFISKY: And you gave -- or
17 you had something on the screen that showed us what
18 some of the criteria were for determining the
19 settlement, you know, for the easement or the
20 right-of-way, but how is that determined? Is this
21 on a per lineal foot basis, a square foot, an acre,
22 or how do they do it? And then you must have some
23 dollar value associated with some of these different
24 things, such as, oh, like your limitation of
25 potential buyers or, you know, devaluation of your

1 property, so how do you determine that exactly?

2 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Again, I'll ask Tom
3 to address that question.

4 MR. HILLSTROM: Well, those kind of
5 factors are considered, and I can tell you that it's
6 not a unit cost, there's not a standard formula, I
7 can't tell you it's this much per square foot or
8 this much per acre because each parcel is analyzed
9 individually. And it's analyzed based on, you know,
10 how can this line affect the value of the property.
11 And it takes into account all of the things you
12 mentioned and in the end, like I said earlier, the
13 utility arrives at that and if the landowner doesn't
14 agree with what the utility is proposing, again, the
15 landowner has that option of saying, you know, I'll
16 take this to the commission, I'll take it to the
17 eminent domain process, and that brings in those
18 three local assessors who can moderate and decide
19 what the value really should be.

20 So, because the utilities know that the
21 landowner has that option, the utilities have to
22 give a fair price to begin with. And we do. And
23 we've got a long record of working with landowners,
24 we do pay a fair price, but I can't tell you what
25 that price is per unit because it varies so much and

1 it all depends on the individual characteristics of
2 your property.

3 MR. DENNIS KREOFISKY: Well, I guess my
4 concern is, you know, if this easement, you know,
5 just clips a corner of somebody's property, it
6 probably doesn't have the same potential as it does
7 mine where it goes diagonally. I have 160 acres, it
8 goes diagonally from corner to corner. Right now I
9 have five sets of poles on my property, and based on
10 the terrain, I've talked to the engineers and
11 they've looked at it and they don't think I'm going
12 to end up with any less, maybe even an extra one.

13 So, you know, my concern is, you know, is
14 it affecting me because -- more because I've got
15 this kitty-corner across my property versus somebody
16 where it just catches the corner of the property.
17 Is the settlement different in that situation?

18 MR. HILLSTROM: Again, this is not what I
19 do for a living. We have agents that do this. So I
20 can't answer it specifically, but just thinking
21 about it logically, I would say yes. I mean, a
22 person whose property just is nicked on the corner
23 by a line would not get nearly as much as you would
24 where the line goes through diagonally right through
25 your property.

1 MR. DENNIS KREOFSKY: That's all I have.
2 Thank you.

3 MR. LANGAN: Thank you.

4 Yes, please, right here.

5 MS. LAURA KREOFSKY: Laura Kreofsky,
6 K-R-E-O-F-S-K-Y. We spoke earlier. My question is,
7 you talked about the Alma crossing being the
8 easiest, the best, as far as entrance and crossing
9 the river and the exit. What happens when you get
10 to Wisconsin, you're on the Wisconsin side in Alma,
11 Winona, LaCrosse, what makes the route any better
12 going south crossing at Alma?

13 MR. LANGAN: Okay. In terms of the
14 portion of the project that goes into the state of
15 Wisconsin, the state of Wisconsin has a process
16 that's -- it's not exactly similar to ours, but they
17 have a Public Service Commission there that will
18 review the application for that portion of the
19 route. And, you know, for my part, I have no
20 jurisdiction in the state of Wisconsin. But the
21 utility will need to submit an application there for
22 a review of that proposed route where they would go
23 from Alma down to northern LaCrosse.

24 And, Tom, I don't know if you want to add
25 anything, Tom, to that process on that side of the

1 river.

2 MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah, it's a very good
3 question and I'll answer it directly. From Alma, on
4 the Wisconsin side you have multiple route options.
5 Because what we have in Wisconsin is existing
6 transmission lines. There are two 161 transmission
7 lines that come to Alma from the Wisconsin side.
8 One of them goes down the river, parallel with the
9 river, directly to LaCrosse. Another one goes east
10 to the Wisconsin town of Arcadia and then from there
11 there's other transmission lines that go to the
12 south. So there are two good route options that
13 follow transmission lines like they talked about
14 earlier, those are good opportunities to minimize
15 the impacts. They can be removed and replaced with
16 that double circuit configuration like we talked
17 about. So Alma has options.

18 Crossing at Winona on the Wisconsin side
19 brings us to Trempealeau Wildlife Refuge. And what
20 we heard from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is
21 that that is such a sensitive area that they oppose
22 that route, they wouldn't permit it. So that
23 questions even the feasibility of building that
24 route.

25 What we get if we cross at Le Crescent

1 into LaCrosse, is that route brings us into the
2 middle of the city of LaCrosse, and we've looked at
3 end points for that route and what we find is the
4 existing substation is surrounded by wetlands, and
5 that substation would need to be expanded to the
6 tune of about five acres of new fill in a wetland,
7 and what the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers tells us
8 is that's not permitable either.

9 So we've looked at other potential end
10 points in the city of LaCrosse and identified them,
11 and the best one that we found would require the
12 removal of a warehouse and a trucking facility and a
13 purchase of a parcel of land that is valued by the
14 city of LaCrosse, because they are very hemmed in
15 and their industrial land is highly valued and we
16 would need to purchase that parcel from that
17 existing business and it's valued at something like
18 \$15 million to buy that property. And it's opposed
19 by the city of LaCrosse because they have very
20 limited industrial space because they are hemmed in
21 by the bluffs on one side, the river on the other
22 side, and they're just kind of pinched in a
23 north-south direction along the river there.

24 So what we find with Winona and Le
25 Crescent, as far as route options in Wisconsin,

1 they're pretty bleak. And that's one of the big
2 reasons why those two route options were not
3 favored.

4 Now, adding onto that, there are features
5 of the river itself, the river is wider at Winona
6 and LaCrosse so there would be more impact to the
7 floodplain wetlands, and existing right-of-ways for
8 the existing power line is narrower, so the Fish and
9 Wildlife Service would have a difficult time
10 allowing us to widen that easement and for us to get
11 the right kind of structures in there.

12 You add on top of that, the routes in
13 Minnesota leading to Le Crescent or Winona go
14 through that area we talked about earlier, a very
15 hilly, wooded valley and bluff land terrain where
16 there is no existing linear feature that we can
17 follow for 10 to 15 miles on the Minnesota side. So
18 all those factors kind of stack up very highly
19 against the Le Crescent and the Winona crossing,
20 even to the point where we consider them to be
21 marginally even feasible to permit and to build.

22 MS. LAURA KREOFISKY: So, basically, this
23 line that is going to be going up is not for us,
24 it's for other areas of this country. We're not
25 getting any power off of this. It's not going to

1 any of our substations. My substation's in
2 Whitewater coming from Dairyland. So this is going
3 to Chicago or out west somewhere, right?

4 MR. HILLSTROM: Well, it does benefit
5 this whole area. Because the power that feeds in
6 from these bulk lines gets fed into these
7 substations and from these substations it radiates
8 out on the lower voltage system, and that lower
9 voltage system is again radiated out on the
10 distribution circuits.

11 An analogy might be to say, well, because
12 I-90, you know, people are going to Wisconsin, it
13 doesn't benefit Minnesota. I mean, it's the same
14 kind of deal. An interstate highway is like these
15 high voltage transmission lines. It does benefit
16 other regions, you know, on I-90 people travel from
17 Minnesota to Wisconsin on the east or west to the
18 Dakotas, but it does provide benefit here locally,
19 too. It's the same kind of a system.

20 MS. LAURA KREOFISKY: Okay. My other
21 question. You stated that when you do come across
22 at the Alma crossing, on our property right now, as
23 my husband said, we have five sets of poles, two
24 doubles, one triple, that you would set up one pole,
25 move Dairyland's two lines onto it, you would take

1 one line, some of this paperwork states that there's
2 a potential for a future line. So are we back at
3 this in 30 years for that future line or are we SOL
4 because we made this agreement now?

5 MR. HILLSTROM: No, the proposal would be
6 to remove that existing line and to replace it with
7 the new structures that would hold the new line and
8 the old line. The thing that I think you're getting
9 at is in the certificate of need proceeding that
10 Matt mentioned earlier, there was a condition in
11 there that, you know, we started out with this
12 proposal as a single circuit of 345 kilovolts, and
13 through that certificate of need proceeding, people
14 intervened in it, and there was some environmental
15 groups, there was some wind groups that wanted that
16 line upgraded to a higher voltage.

17 And in the end what the PUC decided was
18 that these lines should be built to be
19 double-circuit capable. And what that means is that
20 the structures should be built stout enough to hold
21 two circuits of 345. So what our proposal would be
22 in your area is to build this double-circuit line
23 holding the new line and the existing line, but the
24 structures themselves would be stout enough so that
25 in the future, that if a second 345 line needed to

1 be built on that circuit, the existing 161 could be
2 taken off the other side and a 345 replacing it.
3 And if that were to happen, that 161 line would be
4 completely replaced by that 345 line. We wouldn't
5 need to build another line next to it.

6 So our proposal is to remove the existing
7 structures and to replace them with the new
8 structures that are capable of holding two circuits.

9 Is that confusing?

10 MS. LAURA KREOFSKY: Well, for a minute I
11 thought you were sticking another pole on there.

12 MR. HILLSTROM: No, no.

13 MS. LAURA KREOFSKY: Okay. Back to her
14 question about the route width, the 1,000 feet.
15 Okay. It's directly over our house and halfway into
16 the Buffalo corral and they're not happy about it
17 and we're not happy about it. And I'm wondering,
18 you know, where you see this 1,000 coming, the poles
19 are sitting way over here (indicating). Why was the
20 1,000 feet chosen to go into the homestead instead
21 of out into the field where you can tear out more
22 trees when you come through, which wouldn't make
23 people happy either.

24 MR. HILLSTROM: That's a good question.
25 And I sense that there is some concern about the

1 1,000-foot corridor. That's kind of an arbitrary
2 width that we came up with just to define a corridor
3 to study within.

4 The important drawing on the map is the
5 center line that we show on the map. And that's
6 where we would intend to build that route. And in
7 your particular case that existing power line is the
8 center line. There would be no reason for us to go
9 to a far edge of that 1,000-foot route corridor.
10 While it's technically possible, I can't think of a
11 single instance where it would be something that we
12 would propose, to go to an outer limit of that
13 1,000-foot corridor.

14 We put enough work into these routes to
15 know the feature that we're following, whether it's
16 a property boundary or a road or existing
17 transmission line, we would not propose to go
18 significantly off of that center line unless there
19 were good reason to do that. And that may be, a
20 landowner decides that it would be better or for a
21 good reason to deviate from the existing center
22 line, that might be a possibility where we could
23 tweak that alignment. There may be in some cases
24 buried utilities that have to be avoided that would
25 require a bit of a change in alignment. So the

1 reason for that 1,000-foot corridor is to provide
2 flexibility to accommodate landowner wishes and
3 unforeseen engineering issues. But we would not
4 propose to deviate unless there were really good
5 reasons to do that.

6 Another thing I should mention is that
7 while the permit would give us the -- would allow us
8 to build within that 1,000-foot route corridor,
9 after we do our engineering we need to submit our
10 plan back to Matt, he has a chance to review that
11 final engineering plan, and he has a chance to ask
12 us why in the world would we go on the edge of that
13 route. So it doesn't give us carte blanche to go
14 anywhere that we want to, if we deviate from that
15 center line we have to have a good reason.

16 MS. LAURA KREOFISKY: So any of us
17 homeowners here, real estate people, when we get our
18 easement it'll be defined that it's this section, I
19 mean, it's going to be clear cut?

20 MR. HILLSTROM: Absolutely. That's one
21 thing that I do know about is easements, is they
22 have to be defined and they have to be defined
23 exactly what they cover on the landscape.

24 MS. LAURA KREOFISKY: Okay. And so the
25 accessibility to the other 1,000 feet disappears,

1 you've got your 150 and that's it?

2 MR. HILLSTROM: Right. Right.

3 MS. LAURA KREOFISKY: Thank you.

4 MR. LANGAN: Okay. For the patient
5 gentleman back here. Thank you.

6 We do have a fairness in court reporter's
7 act around here, and so we will take a bit of a
8 break so Janet can rest up after you're done. Thank
9 you.

10 MR. BRUCE BAKER: My name is Bruce Baker,
11 B-A-K-E-R. I guess my question probably is for Tom.

12 I live down where it comes across the
13 Alma across the Mississippi, I'm the first farm
14 there, homestead there that goes by, and you talked
15 about all the other routes except for the McCarthy
16 Lake alternate route, and I don't know why you
17 didn't talk about that one.

18 MR. HILLSTROM: That was an oversight.
19 That is on the map, that is proposed on our permit
20 application as an alternate route. And what that
21 does is it goes around the McCarthy Lake wildlife
22 management area and it avoids that state homeland.
23 You're exactly right, that is still in play, that is
24 in the route application, me not mentioning it was
25 just an oversight.

1 MR. BRUCE BAKER: Do you have to get a
2 permit the same as like the landowners do through
3 the state where it goes through McCarthy Lake? My
4 land adjoins McCarthy Lake.

5 MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah, the difference
6 would be, instead of us buying an easement from the
7 State of Minnesota, we would buy it -- we would
8 apply for a license, so it's a little different
9 piece of paper that we'd have to get from them.

10 MR. BRUCE BAKER: Why wouldn't they look
11 at an alternate route that would just go south into
12 McCarthy Lake a little bit farther, it wouldn't have
13 to go, you know, up 300 feet, 500 feet, or even
14 1,000 feet, it would be farther away from my
15 property, you know, and it wouldn't be no closer to
16 anybody's property whatever.

17 MR. HILLSTROM: We struggled with that
18 bypass a little bit. The idea was that, you know,
19 this is a wildlife management area and there would
20 probably be some people who are concerned with the
21 route going through there, but on the other hand,
22 there's an existing transmission line going through
23 there and the idea of that would be that, you know,
24 the impact would be measured, you know, what's the
25 condition now versus what's the condition after we

1 build this line.

2 And in our mind it was, you know, there
3 was not much difference because it's an existing
4 corridor, but it is a state wildlife management area
5 so we provided that route that would go around it.
6 And here again, we did our best job looking at
7 property lines trying to find a way around that, and
8 that may not be the best alternate route, and if you
9 have a better idea I think that's something that you
10 could certainly draw on a map and give to Matt as an
11 alternate route there.

12 MR. BRUCE BAKER: I was hoping somebody
13 from McCarthy Lake or wildlife would be here just
14 because it does go through the wildlife refuge down
15 there. And especially getting back to the
16 gentleman's question there, if anybody wanted to
17 look at what it looks like when you do your 150-foot
18 clearing or whatever, drive down County Road 84, my
19 property's got bigger shoulders, just drive in and
20 I'll show you, or drive all the way down to the
21 other end and it's a mess, a real mess. Dairyland
22 says they're going to come back and fix it, but they
23 did it in the wintertime when the ground was froze
24 and now it's wet and swampy, my ground is pretty
25 swampy, and they will make a worse mess if they come

1 back now and it's a disaster. Thank you.

2 MR. LANGAN: Okay. What we'll do is
3 we'll take a 15-minute break. Do people still have
4 questions and comments? I figured that's the case,
5 so let's take a 15-minute break and we'll reconvene
6 then.

7 (Break taken from 8:44 to 9:10.)

8 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Folks, we're set to
9 begin again here. And I'll ask that you take your
10 seats and we'll take other comments or questions.

11 Okay, so Dale, is that still the score?

12 MR. DALE ROHLFING: 3/2 Twins, I think.

13 MR. LANGAN: That's important public
14 information that we're sharing.

15 Okay. Again, just raise your hand if you
16 have a question or comment. Okay. Yes, sir.

17 MR. CURTIS KUECKER: Curtis Kuecker,
18 that's Curtis with a C, K-U-E-C-K-E-R.

19 I have a question about what you do with
20 all the fill when you dig this 10- to 40-foot hole.
21 And then how many yards of cement, how many trucks
22 will be going across your property to get back there
23 to put in all these poles.

24 And for woodland you have a perpetual
25 loss of income on that swath that you're going to

1 take on my farmland where you can actually get
2 income or raise crops off of it, you have loss of
3 woodland, you're losing like corridors that wildlife
4 use and things like that.

5 And when you have farmland you have soil
6 compaction and that and who fixes that soil
7 compaction, is it the farmer's responsibility or is
8 it you guys come and fix it and you put a subsoil in
9 there, or how do you bring that soil back to life
10 when you have all these trucks going across your
11 property?

12 And then what do you do with fences? Do
13 you replace the fences or is that my responsibility?
14 I've got cattle in there, do I have to, out of my
15 goodness, put a temporary fence up to keep my cows
16 out of where you're going to be working on?

17 And then another concern is EMF from the
18 power line getting into like an electric fence,
19 'cause that can cause problems.

20 Is that a lot?

21 MR. LANGAN: That was an eight-part
22 question. Thank you. And for most of it I'm going
23 to turn it over to Tom just because a lot of that
24 had to do with construction of the line and some of
25 the considerations for wooded land and fences and

1 operations.

2 We will, in our environmental impact
3 statement, talk about construction activities and
4 how that is staged and the equipment that's used, so
5 that is something that when we get to that phase
6 will be part of that draft EIS.

7 But Tom, or anyone from Xcel, if you want
8 to describe the construction process.

9 MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah, I'll try to
10 remember all those, but I probably won't.

11 The first one that I remember was what do
12 you do with the fill after the crews drill a hole.
13 The way it usually works is that the crews that come
14 out there and work on that hole and drill it, first
15 of all, they're in communication with you as a
16 landowner to get access to tell you what they're up
17 to, and through that communication they give you the
18 option.

19 And normally what happens is that the
20 landowner says, okay, I would like to keep that fill
21 and I'd like you to put it over here in this one
22 certain spot. And our crews do that, they scrape it
23 up, they put it in a truck or a skid steer or
24 something and move it to the place that you want it,
25 as long as that's not a wetland we'll put it

1 anywhere you want it. Or if you don't want the
2 fill, our crews will carry it off site and dispose
3 of it in an appropriate place, a gravel pit or
4 someplace else where soil can be disposed of.

5 And your questions about soil compaction
6 kind of go back to the need to bring concrete out to
7 each one of these foundation areas, and it is true
8 that it requires multiple passes with concrete
9 trucks to build these structures. They're built on
10 concrete foundations that are drilled deep into the
11 ground, so a hole is drilled and a rebar cage is
12 inserted into that hole and then the hole is filled
13 with concrete and that does require multiple passes
14 with concrete trucks. The good part of that is that
15 the poles and the structures end up being very, very
16 strong. And there was some questions earlier about
17 whether the pole tips over. And because of the way
18 these poles are constructed is that they don't tip
19 over. I mean, we've got pictures of these kind of
20 poles in areas where tornados have gone through,
21 everything else is gone except the poles, the poles
22 are still standing, these are very, very strong
23 structures, they don't fall over.

24 But getting back to your questions about
25 construction. If the soil gets compacted by that

1 repeated driving over, those concrete trucks, and
2 it's not really an if, it will get compacted, but
3 the fix for that is a deep chisel plowing to take
4 that compaction out, and sometimes it takes a few
5 years of the freeze-thaw cycle to get it completely
6 out. And, you know, in the case of that happening,
7 the chisel plowing is done at the utility's expense
8 and there even is a provision to give you a crop
9 damage allowance for that few years of reduced yield
10 on that area where it was compacted.

11 So, again, this is another example of the
12 landowner having to be made whole from any damage
13 that's done by our process. We've done this enough
14 to know what the damages are and how to fix them and
15 what the appropriate compensation is for the
16 landowner.

17 And another part of your question was
18 about electric fences, and that's a really good
19 question, too, because if you have an electric fence
20 that's an insulated wire and it runs parallel with
21 the new transmission line for long enough, a current
22 can be induced on that electric fence and equipment
23 may need to be placed on that electric fence to
24 filter out that induced current. So that's
25 something that our engineers are able to look at and

1 identify beforehand and to fix it. If we come in
2 and we cause a problem with your electric fence or
3 your wiring, we fix it. That's the absolute policy
4 of the utility, if we come in and we break
5 something, we fix it.

6 MR. CURTIS KUECKER: If you tear a fence
7 down, do you replace it?

8 MR. HILLSTROM: Oh, yeah, good reminder.
9 While we're working it's very frequent that we have
10 to remove a fence to get access, and if a temporary
11 fence needs to be built, we build that. We
12 understand the need to keep your livestock in where
13 they belong. And that means that our crews have
14 done this enough to know that if they take a fence
15 down, they fix it in as good or better condition
16 when they're done. And while they're working,
17 temporary fences are established to keep the
18 livestock where they belong.

19 Was there another part that we missed?

20 MR. CURTIS KUECKER: How do you
21 compensate for woodland, where you lose the income
22 forever off that piece of property and you still pay
23 taxes on it?

24 MR. HILLSTROM: Right, and that's part of
25 the easement payment. If there is a loss in the

1 value of, say, timber, that would be reimbursed.
2 That's part of the easement compensation.

3 MR. CURTIS KUECKER: 'Cause that's gone
4 forever, you can't use that land, but you're paying
5 tax on it.

6 MR. HILLSTROM: Exactly, and that would
7 be part of the valuation.

8 MR. LANGAN: Great. Anyone else? Yes,
9 sir. I'm sorry, I'll go right behind and then back.
10 Yes, I'm sorry, you, please come on up.

11 MR. JIM SCHREADER: Me?

12 MR. LANGAN: Yes.

13 MR. JIM SCHREADER: Jim Schreader,
14 S-C-H-R-E-A-D-E-R. I have a farm just south of
15 Mazeppa, it's a century farm. The north route would
16 cut it in half and go in a couple hundred feet of
17 the house building site.

18 For Tom I question the need a little bit.
19 Last winter was the first -- for Rochester last
20 winter was the first year that Silver Lake froze
21 over, where they weren't running the power plant,
22 they didn't need the electricity.

23 And somebody else mentioned removal of
24 the poles, if they came to where they did not need
25 them. Alternative energy is very real, fuel cells

1 are a real possibility, they could replace power
2 plants completely.

3 And also I think you mentioned the PUC is
4 appointed by the governor, so could their decisions
5 be tied into politics?

6 That's it. Thanks.

7 MR. LANGAN: I think there are two parts
8 as an answer to that question. One, with the need,
9 this is a route docket here that we're looking at,
10 so we are not looking at the need of the lines.
11 That has been looked at in the certificate of need
12 process, so various alternatives for delivering the
13 energy and things like that that you suggested,
14 those have been dealt with and are not a part of
15 this -- not a part of this proceeding that we're
16 talking about tonight.

17 With your second part about the Public
18 Utilities Commission, what I can say about the
19 Public Utilities Commission is that there are
20 specific state law and rule that they use to make
21 their decision and that's what governs their
22 decision in this process. Those can be found in
23 statutes. For those of you that like to read state
24 statute, it's in 216E and Minnesota Rules Chapter
25 7850, and those are the guiding regulations by which

1 the Public Utilities Commission makes these
2 determinations.

3 Okay. Sir.

4 MR. DAVID FICK: David Fick, F-I-C-K. I
5 have a lot of questions.

6 MR. LANGAN: Okay.

7 MR. DAVID FICK: So at what point in the
8 process does the landowner receive notification of
9 what kind of compensation they're going to get? Is
10 that after the thing is established?

11 MR. LANGAN: Okay. And let me understand
12 your question. At what point comments are sought
13 and how does the landowner get notified?

14 MR. DAVID FICK: No. When does the
15 landowner know how much his compensation is going to
16 be?

17 MR. LANGAN: Oh, okay. It would be after
18 our route permitting process is complete and it
19 would be after -- well, again, it would be after our
20 process is complete and then at what stage -- Tom,
21 how would you characterize the when of that
22 question?

23 MR. HILLSTROM: After the permit is
24 issued, probably pretty soon after the permit is
25 issued that easement acquisition would begin.

1 MR. DAVID FICK: How many substations
2 would there be on this route from LaCrosse up to --

3 MR. LANGAN: There would be -- there's
4 one substation near the city of Hampton, that's in
5 the --

6 MR. DAVID FICK: Yeah.

7 MR. LANGAN: Okay. And that actually is
8 a new substation that would get built as part of a
9 different project. So there's that. Then as part
10 of this one there would be another substation
11 somewhere in the area between Pine Island and
12 Zumbrota, and then from there, the 345 kilovolt line
13 would go east into the, you know, across the
14 Mississippi and into the state of Wisconsin. From
15 that new substation between Pine Island and Zumbrota
16 the 161 kilovolt line would go south to what is
17 basically northwest of Rochester to an existing
18 substation there.

19 MR. DAVID FICK: So will that substation
20 be the Plainview area?

21 MR. LANGAN: Well, okay, an electrical
22 engineer question.

23 MR. DAVID FICK: I'm wondering, I had
24 heard earlier we're going to get power from this
25 somehow. Is that through the substations; is that

1 right?

2 MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah, and I'm not an
3 electrical engineer, but I think the guy who could
4 answer this question best is in the back of the
5 room, his name is Grant Stevenson, but he's not
6 listening. But --

7 MR. STEVENSON: Yes, sir.

8 MR. HILLSTROM: Grant, there's a question
9 here about the idea of power, local need for power
10 like in the Plainview area here, is it served by our
11 project.

12 MR. STEVENSON: All right. I'm Grant
13 Stevenson, I'm the project manager from Xcel Energy.

14 There are five partners in the project,
15 Xcel Energy, Rochester Public Utilities, Southern
16 Minnesota Municipal Power, Wisconsin Public Power
17 and Dairyland Power Cooperative. So in this area
18 are you served by Peoples Co-op?

19 MR. DAVID FICK: Yeah.

20 MR. STEVENSON: Peoples Co-op gets their
21 power from Dairyland, who is one of the partners in
22 this project. So the benefit area for this project
23 are Rochester Public Utilities customers, Peoples
24 Co-op customers, and those are the two biggest, and
25 to some extent Xcel Energy customers because Xcel

1 Energy has territory in the Pine Island area, and
2 some of the Goodhue County Cooperative, which I
3 think borders, maybe serves into Wabasha County. So
4 for this immediate area, even though the power line
5 doesn't directly connect here, the Peoples Co-op
6 power lines come out of Rochester, generally. Our
7 power line connects into Rochester, it's transformed
8 and used in the city and it's also shipped out on
9 the Peoples Co-op lines. Does that answer your
10 question?

11 MR. DAVID FICK: Yep.

12 MR. STEVENSON: Okay.

13 MR. DAVID FICK: There was talk of a
14 second line or how it is built with the capacity for
15 a second line. Would there be additional
16 compensation at that time or is it done, you can
17 hang as many lines as you want at that point?

18 MR. HILLSTROM: The easement that we
19 would buy would be wide enough -- and I'm
20 overreaching my knowledge here a little bit -- but I
21 think that the easement we would buy, and Grant, you
22 can come in and correct me if I'm wrong here, but
23 the question is, if that second circuit were to be
24 installed one day, would there be additional
25 compensation. And my thought would be that

1 initially what we would buy would be that 150-foot
2 width that would be wide enough for us to install
3 the current project and if in the future we needed
4 to string that second 345 line, that the existing
5 easement would probably be sufficient for that, so I
6 would think that there would not be additional
7 compensation for that second 345 line.

8 MR. DAVID FICK: With the environmental
9 studies, are those considering both lines in place
10 or are the environmental studies with the single
11 line?

12 MR. LANGAN: Well, the environmental
13 studies are going to focus on this line, but
14 understanding that there will be a 150-foot
15 right-of-way. We're looking at a 1,000-foot route
16 and the environmental considerations are within
17 that. If and when -- I'm sorry. If and when a
18 second line would be proposed along here, it would
19 also require a review of that proposal as well.

20 MR. DAVID FICK: All right. Does the
21 state get any revenue from the new lines? Is it
22 taxed? I guess, I don't know, I probably should
23 have -- is power being brought into -- the power
24 comes in from Wisconsin, correct? Is that taxed or
25 anything like that? Or how does -- what's the

1 state's take on it?

2 MR. LANGAN: I don't know.

3 MR. DAVID FICK: Does it just grant
4 permission and stands back?

5 MR. LANGAN: I would certainly open it up
6 to any of my colleagues in the room that may be able
7 to answer that question. I'm sorry, I don't know
8 the answer. I can look into that for you and try to
9 provide an answer, but I just don't know.

10 MR. DAVID FICK: And I apologize again.
11 I'm new in this process, I just purchased my land
12 almost a year ago today, so I wasn't around when the
13 first assessments were done and it sounds like this
14 is a routing thing, a meeting.

15 Who can I talk to that can tell me about
16 when the assessments were done how nontransmission
17 line solutions were eliminated? Is that in a report
18 somewhere?

19 MR. LANGAN: It is. As part of the
20 certificate of need process, there is an
21 application, just somewhat similar to what is
22 submitted here when a route proposal comes up.
23 There's an application that gets processed, it goes
24 through a PUC review and approval process and is
25 ultimately granted or denied based on that review.

1 There is a link, if you go to our docket
2 page for the routing, if I'm not mistaken we have a
3 link to that docket, so you can actually just click
4 on that link on our project page and it would bring
5 you to that site and all of the materials that were
6 submitted through that process so you could look
7 through and understand that process and how the
8 decisions were made.

9 MR. DAVID FICK: Okay. Then my final
10 question is along the same lines. Who initiated
11 this whole project two years ago? Does the state
12 say, hey, I think we've got some problems here, or
13 does the utility company approach the state and say,
14 hey, you guys are deficient?

15 MR. LANGAN: It originates with the
16 utility submitting that application to us, and
17 before that application is submitted to us there's
18 studies and planning before that.

19 MR. DAVID FICK: On the utility's end?

20 MR. LANGAN: Yeah. And I think Tom will
21 be able to give you a better answer on that.

22 MR. HILLSTROM: Again, two of the people
23 here tonight did work on that certificate of need
24 effort, it's Amanda and Warren in the back of the
25 room, and of anybody, they are the two people with

1 the most knowledge of that process and they're here
2 to talk to you. So it would be a good opportunity
3 for you, after you're done with your questions here,
4 to get more details from them.

5 MR. DAVID FICK: All right. I guess
6 that's all I have then.

7 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Thank you.

8 MR. STEVEN WALKER: My name is
9 Steven Walker, Zumbro Falls. I'm on the second
10 alternate route across the power dam.

11 But first I'd like to say that all the
12 routes in my area, I have lived there for 57 years,
13 and all of the neighbors really would rather not
14 have it, but we don't have a choice. But it is very
15 hard from the north group to the south group to the
16 middle group, it takes all of us. What I'm trying
17 to say is it's putting us all at odds. Because one
18 group don't want it, the other group wants it, and
19 it's making it very unfair and it makes the whole
20 neighborhood edgy. But I did -- I would like to see
21 it on the preferred route, but all the routes would
22 be impacted that it may run.

23 One of my questions is, the line that it
24 runs on, you're getting a 150-foot swipe, or 75
25 foot, that should come off of your taxes. We

1 shouldn't as farmers, or whoever, have to pay taxes
2 on it. I mean, this thing, if it would go down
3 mine, it would go a mile and a half down my fence
4 line. I'm paying taxes on that. I mean, if you
5 guys are going to have the right-of-way, why
6 shouldn't that come off of my taxes, that portion of
7 it, you know?

8 And, also, there are a lot of sinkholes.
9 And we've had terraces and waterways and ponds put
10 on that farm in 1961, that's what my dad started,
11 that project, contour strips and all that. And it
12 will jump across footsteps of my farm. And that's
13 hard, you know. I mean, you're saying in Winona
14 there's a business that is a \$15 million business
15 that's a trucking business. Okay, I would like to
16 go to that business and say has that business been
17 in business for 57 years? That's how long we've
18 owned our farm, or longer. And so why can't I put a
19 price on my farmland like they are on their
20 business? And say, hey, my property is worth this,
21 just like their business. I don't want it on my
22 property and they're saying they don't want it on
23 their property and it's going to cost too much money
24 for you guys to buy that. Why isn't the person that
25 has had the land for many years, why don't they get

1 out there and still care about the land, other than
2 to just say, oh, let's put a fixture on here and the
3 next generation can put up with it. They still want
4 to look after their land and have it there for the
5 next generation. There are a few people out there
6 that are that way yet. Thank you.

7 MR. LANGAN: Thank you.

8 UNIDENTIFIED: Can you answer his
9 questions about the taxes?

10 MR. STEVEN WALKER: Can you answer my
11 question on the taxes?

12 MR. HILLSTROM: I don't think I can. I
13 don't know the answer to that. But I think because
14 you still own title to the land that you would still
15 pay the taxes.

16 MR. STEVEN WALKER: But that's something
17 that as the people putting the line through, you
18 guys could look at that and say, okay, that acre of
19 land that's under that power line, we've got the
20 right-of-way, you guys could talk to the Wabasha
21 County or whatever county you're going through and
22 say this part of the land is devalued because of the
23 lines going under it, so let's see if we can get
24 that piece of land to a zero tax base for that one
25 mile or one acre or whatever, because there's a lot

1 of -- you know, it is devalued.

2 MR. HILLSTROM: That's a fair question
3 and I really don't have a solid answer to it right
4 now.

5 MR. STEVEN WALKER: Well, it could be
6 something that maybe your lawyers or something could
7 look into to see if there's something that could be
8 done about that.

9 MR. HILLSTROM: Um-hum.

10 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Sir.

11 MR. JOHN MANLEY: John Manley,
12 M-A-N-L-E-Y.

13 My question about these easements and
14 stuff is, like, I've got easements across my farm,
15 they were put in there in 1934, and they valued it
16 at that price and, like I'm saying, the taxes keep
17 going up. We should be compensated for whatever
18 your taxes go up from the time they are there. I
19 mean, it just ain't fair to the landowners that we
20 got to keep paying increase in taxes and the power
21 company keeps getting more money for the power and
22 we're getting no more compensation.

23 I mean, maybe every 10 years maybe we
24 should renegotiate for the value of the property.
25 My property, in 1934, it was probably renting for

1 maybe 3 to 10 bucks an acre. I'm getting 275 bucks
2 an acre now. So, I mean, there's a big indiscretion
3 there. They've got to think of another better way
4 for how to compensate for this farmland. It's
5 something you got to think about.

6 MR. LANGAN: Thank you. Yes, sir.

7 MR. STEPHEN HACKMAN: My name is Steve
8 Hackman, H-A-C-K-M-A-N.

9 And I guess I'm kind of running the risk
10 of getting out of the scope of the scoping meeting,
11 but we're drifting that way anyway. So in an effort
12 to bring it back in, earlier on your slide that you
13 had a lot of topics on that you couldn't read
14 because there was so many, and one of them was
15 cultural economics, cultural -- I forget your exact
16 word.

17 And I guess what I'm seeing here is the
18 farther you get north into the country, into the
19 alternate route where I live, and it sounds like a
20 lot of these people, too, which is people have more
21 value to their land, or should I say their home,
22 than what the dollar value is, so what encourages me
23 through this whole process, I'm becoming a little
24 less worried and I'm hoping that common sense will
25 prevail. However, being a good German that looks at

1 every possible thing, I've lost sleep over the what
2 ifs, so I'd like to address the what ifs.

3 And I'd like to encourage everybody that
4 is in the what if category like myself to look into
5 what is called Buy the Farm. It's a state statute
6 under the eminent domain -- and I'm no lawyer so
7 please don't take my advice -- but basically you can
8 force them to buy the entire farm if they piece
9 chunks off.

10 Another important thing, there is
11 legislation now that in talking to my representative
12 that I understand is putting more teeth for the
13 landowner on the eminent domain law. So I would
14 encourage you to call your rep and keep it pushing
15 along. Because from what I understand, it's on the
16 governor's desk.

17 UNIDENTIFIED: It got signed today.

18 MR. STEPHEN HACKMAN: Excellent.
19 Perfect. All right. Well, see, somebody is looking
20 out for us, it's coming together. So, anyway,
21 that's my whole comment.

22 MR. LANGAN: It was -- well, it was
23 cultural resources, that may have been what it was,
24 but understood. Understood.

25 MR. STEPHEN HACKMAN: We're back in the

1 scope.

2 MR. LANGAN: Yes, sir.

3 MR. STEVEN WALKER: Steve Walker. And
4 with the cost of this going through, with all this,
5 everything that has to be, is this going to raise
6 the cost of our electricity? That's a good question
7 because, you know, somebody's got to pay for it.

8 MR. LANGAN: Sure.

9 MR. HILLSTROM: Tim Carlsgaard is the guy
10 in the back of the room, he knows how to answer this
11 question.

12 MR. CARLSGAARD: The answer is yes, we'll
13 all pay for it. I can only tell you that we've run
14 the numbers for Xcel Energy customers, and
15 transmission is about 7 to 10 percent of your
16 electricity bill. For these lines, now that the
17 certificate of need has been approved, we can start
18 charging back customers for the costs as we move
19 forward. And this, in 2010, for an Xcel Energy
20 customer, it's about 25 cents per month I think
21 starting in May. And at the height of construction,
22 when we're spending the most money, it'll be about a
23 \$3 per month increase.

24 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Thank you. Other
25 comments or questions?

1 Okay. I want to thank everybody for
2 being here tonight. We appreciate the fact that
3 this is emotional for a lot of you and that a lot of
4 you have already invested a lot of time in tracking
5 this project. We've had a 12-month review that
6 we're in the middle of and I'd encourage you and ask
7 you to keep up with the project, keep participating.
8 I know that's a lot to ask, everyone is busy, have
9 their own day jobs and their own lives, but we
10 appreciate you coming out and being civil and
11 measured in your comments despite it being an
12 emotional issue.

13 So thank you very much for your
14 participation. I'll remind you that May 20th is the
15 deadline for scoping comments, so please get in any
16 comments on issues or impacts or additional
17 alternative route segments to us at that time. The
18 comments are sent to me. In the meantime, you have
19 my contact information, you have Ray's contact
20 information, so please feel free and give us a call
21 should you have any questions in the meantime.

22 Thanks again.

23 (Meeting concluded at 9:44 p.m.)
24
25